

Galileo – Sexual Diversity

Student Questions & Answers

Why do people have sex?

Lots of reasons, it is a key biological drive. Our brains are programmed to crave sexual release. Also to express love or affection, because it can feel good.

The Texas psychologists identified four major factors and 13 sub-factors for why people have sex:

- Physical reasons such as to reduce stress ("It seemed like good exercise"), feel pleasure ("It's exciting"), improve or expand experiences ("I was curious about sex"), and the physical desirability of their partner ("The person was a good dancer").
- Goal-based reasons, including utilitarian or practical considerations ("I wanted to have a baby"), social status ("I wanted to be popular") and revenge ("I wanted to give someone else a sexually transmitted disease").
- Emotional reasons such as love and commitment ("I wanted to feel connected") and expression ("I wanted to say 'thank you'").
- Insecurity-based reasons, including self-esteem ("I wanted the attention"), a feeling of duty or pressure ("My partner kept insisting") and to guard a mate ("I wanted to keep my partner from straying").

What is sexuality? How can I get one?

Sexuality refers to how humans experience the erotic and express themselves as sexual beings, their awareness of themselves as male or female, the capacity they have for erotic experiences and/or responses. Generally it is about who you are, who you love and how you express that physically. You don't need to get sexuality, you already have one 😊

What is sexual diversity?

Sexual diversity means that everyone has different understandings about what sexuality means to them.

Sexuality can mean that you are attracted to someone of the opposite gender (straight), the same gender (gay or lesbian) or both genders (bisexual) – there is no wrong, right or 'normal' sexuality.

It is up to you to decide what kind of sexuality you have, and you cannot decide for anyone else what kind of sexuality is right for them. Bullying, homophobia and harassment can all change what you think and feel about your sexuality, but only you can know what suits you best.

Whatever sexuality you decide, this can change throughout your life, and it is best to

see sexuality as being whatever you want it to be, whenever you want it to be – because you never know what will happen in your life.

What is the ratio of homosexual people to straight people in Australia?

The proportion of people who do not identify as heterosexual is between 8 – 11% of the population. There are more non-heterosexual people in the US than there are total people in Australia.

Is homosexuality genetic?

There is no simple answer to the question, 'Are some people born lesbian or gay?' There are some theories that stress biological differences between heterosexual and homosexual adults, suggesting that people are born with their sexuality already determined.

What is clear is that people's behaviour is influenced by their family environment, their experiences and their sense of themselves. Beliefs about sex are initially shaped by family values. Later on these beliefs may be shaped by pleasant and unpleasant experiences of sex and also shape their choice of activities and partners. Throughout their life a person's sense of who and what they are has a strong impact on their sexual development and experience.

Homosexual behaviour is widespread in the animal world too. Giraffes, elephants, dolphins, monkeys, birds, sheep and many more display homosexual behaviours.

How can you be sure of your sexuality?

Being a teenager can be really confusing; you start to think you have coped with puberty and then other feelings emerge. You may start to wonder, "Could I be gay?" There isn't a questionnaire or survey you can take to find out! While your sexuality and your understanding of it are developing many teens will become attracted to someone of the same gender – it doesn't mean you will always be attracted to people of that gender. Some people can be quite old before they experience their first same sex attraction. The only way to know for sure is to wait and see. Other people seem to have known from a young age that they were gay; everyone's different.

What do I do if my friend tells me they are gay?

You cannot ever understand what it is like to be another person. What you can do is stay real to the situation at hand, no matter what it may be. Your friend's sexual orientation has little more impact on your life than; his drinking preferences, drug use, current steady date or academic performance. What will have a huge impact on your life is the loss of a dear friend. Your friend trusted you and your friendship enough to confide this in you. Gay people tend to first come out to those they trust

and to those who they need in their lives. Be supportive, a good listener, don't assume they are attracted to you and show support by joining groups like Spectrum, denouncing homophobic jokes, etc.

What is the point of same sex relationships?

What is the point of heterosexual relationships?

Why are people mean to gay/homosexual people?

Various reasons drive homophobia. These reasons include, religious and/or cultural beliefs, a feeling of needing to control their environment and homosexuals threatening their sense of control and or view of the world, fear that one may be homosexual themselves.

What is the biggest age difference possible for two people to date?

Dating really isn't a problem. Having sex is where the issue gets tricky. In Victoria, the age of consent (that is the age at which one can legally consent to having sex) for young people is 16. This is true for heterosexual and homosexual couples. This age varies from state to state. The exception is if the person is over 10 and the other party is not more than 2 years older.

Are there different laws for people with different sexualities?

As mentioned, the age of consent laws vary from state to state but also they can vary depending on the type of sex involved, straight, male-to-male or female-to-female. The Gillard government has done a lot of work to remove the discrepancies in Australian laws but some still exist. For example, it remains illegal for gay *couples* to adopt children they are not biologically related to in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory, however in Victoria and Queensland (and in special circumstances in the NT) a gay *person* can adopt a child, just not a couple.

And while not a law, gay men in Australia (or any male who has had male-to-male sex in the last year) are still forbidden to donate blood for fear of HIV transmission. This is regardless of a gay man's sexual history or relationship status.

Why aren't same sex marriages allowed?

This is a contentious issue in Australia. Other countries allow same-sex marriage yet Australian parliament is yet to pass a bill allowing same-sex marriage.

Why are most religions against homosexuality?

Homosexuality **is generally** defined as sexual interest in and attraction to members of one's own sex. In different eras, cultures, and religions, homosexual behaviour has been variously approved, tolerated, punished, or banned.

Homosexuality was not uncommon in ancient cultures, though the forms and views of homosexual behavior vary significantly. In most of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, both the subject and the behaviour are considered taboo, with some slight exception made in urban areas. The ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans were generally accepting of homosexual behavior within certain contexts. Hinduism and Buddhism tend to view homosexuality primarily from the standpoint of its karmic effects, with varying conclusions.

Jewish, Christian, Sikh and Muslim cultures have generally perceived homosexual behaviour as sinful. Many Jewish and Christian leaders, however, have gone to great lengths to make clear that it is the homosexual acts and not the homosexual individuals or their "orientation" that is condemned. Some liberal strands of both mainstream Protestant Christianity and Reform Judaism advocate, on theological as well as social grounds, the full acceptance of homosexuals and their relationships.

What happens if two hermaphrodites (intersex) have sex?

That depends on which sexual organs they have and what procedures were carried out when they were born.

Why do I not love someone?

You probably haven't met the right person yet.

Masturbation. Is it normal?

While it once was regarded as a perversion and a sign of a mental problem, masturbation now is regarded as a normal, healthy sexual activity that is pleasant, fulfilling, acceptable, and safe. It is a good way to experience sexual pleasure and can be done throughout life.

Masturbation is only considered a problem when it inhibits sexual activity with a partner, is done in public, or causes significant distress to the person. It may cause distress if it is done compulsively and/or interferes with daily life and activities.

Things to remember; hygiene is important to prevent infection and transmit germs. It is also great if you find something that works for you but be sure to vary your

routine to ensure your body can respond to a range of sensations rather than just one. Remember the neural pathways!!

Why am I so attracted to myself? Is this healthy?

As you grow up and experience hormonal changes, sexual urges and experiment sexually, being attracted to yourself is normal. It does not mean that you are narcissistic or dysfunctional in any way.

Is it normal to have feelings for someone whilst going out with someone else?

It is normal yes. It can be confusing and/or inconvenient though.